

CIA OPERATIONS CENTER

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(HELMS)

(BY LAURENCE MCQUILLAN)

WASHINGTON (UPI) - ATTORNEY GENERAL GRIFFIN BELL SAID TODAY HE HAS REACHED A DECISION WHETHER TO PROSECUTE FORMER CIA DIRECTOR RICHARD HELMS, BUT WON'T DIVULGE IT UNTIL HE DISCUSSES IT FURTHER WITH PRESIDENT CARTER.

HELMS HAS BEEN UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR ALLEGATIONS HE LIED TO A CONGRESSIONAL PANEL DURING ITS PROBE OF WHETHER THE CIA TRIED TO SUBVERT THE MARXIST REGIME OF CHILEAN PRESIDENT SALVADOR ALLENDE. HELMS SAID THE AGENCY PLAYED NO DIRECT PART IN ALLENDE'S OVERTHROW.

BELL FIRST TOLD REPORTERS AT THE WHITE HOUSE THERE WAS "NOTHING NEW" IN THE HELMS CASE, BUT WHEN ASKED WHETHER HE REACHED AN DECISION ON POSSIBLE PROSECUTION, HE SAID:

"WELL, I HAVE, I THINK, REACHED A DECISION."

HE SAID HE HAD "DISCUSSED IT WITH THE PRESIDENT, ONLY IN A GENERAL WAY" AND THAT HE WANTED TO PRESENT IT MORE FULLY TO CARTER.

CIA DIRECTOR STANFELD TURNER TOLD A NEWS CONFERENCE LAST MONTH THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT CHOOSE NOT TO PROSECUTE HELMS FOR FEAR SENSITIVE SECURITY MATTERS WOULD BECOME PUBLIC.

BELL SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH A GRAND JURY.

ASKED WHETHER HE WAS CONSIDERING ANY DEVICES BY WHICH A GRAND JURY INDICTMENT, WHICH WAS NOT SOUGHT BY THE GOVERNMENT, COULD BE DROPPED, HE REPLIED: "NO, NOT YET."

BELL SAID A DECISION WAS LIKELY TO BE MADE PUBLIC - "PERHAPS WITHIN TWO WEEKS."

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